



1956 Folsom Dam Built

Construction of Folsom Dam was completed in 1956. Folsom Dam is operated to provide flood control, water supply, hydropower, and incidental recreation benefits.

Based on the hydrologic record available during the 1950s, it was thought that Folsom Dam would provide protection from a flood with a 1-in-300 chance of occurring in any year.

1986 Flood

The flood of 1986 was the largest flood ever recorded for the Sacramento and American Rivers. It pushed Sacramento’s flood control system to its limit and triggered a major reevaluation of the system by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

The reevaluation identified numerous deficiencies and concluded that large portions of the City of Sacramento did not have protection from a flood with a 1-in-100 chance of occurring in any year.



1969-70 NEPA/CEQA Enacted

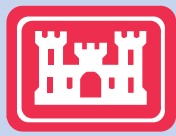
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted in 1969 in response to an overwhelming national sentiment that federal agencies should take a lead in providing greater protection for the environment.

Similarly, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires state, local, and other agencies subject to the jurisdiction of the State of California (State) to evaluate the environmental implications of their actions. Furthermore, it aims to prevent agency actions from negatively affecting the environment by requiring agencies to avoid or reduce the significant environmental impacts of their decisions, when feasible.

Federally sponsored and state-sponsored flood control projects are subject to both NEPA and CEQA.

1988 American River Watershed Investigation

In 1988, Congress directed the Corps to initiate the American River Watershed Investigation (ARWI) to identify feasible solutions to Sacramento’s flood problems.



American River Flood Control History

1991

ARWI Feasibility Report

The ARWI Feasibility Report analyzed Sacramento's flooding problems and identified several potentially feasible solutions. The report recommended construction of a flood control detention dam near Auburn and levee and channel improvements in and around Natomas sufficient to provide Sacramento protection from a flood with a 1-in-200 chance of occurring in any year.

1995

Reoperation of Folsom Dam

In March 1995, SAFCA entered into an agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to increase the space available for flood control at Folsom Reservoir, with the amount of increase depending on storage conditions in three non-Federal reservoirs located in the upper reaches of the American River watershed. This agreement, known as the "reoperation agreement," provides for variable storage space for flood control, further reducing the risk of flooding from the Lower American River.

1975

1980

1985

1990

1992

Water Resources Development Act

In 1992, the Corps, The Reclamation Board, and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) sought congressional approval for the recommended flood control dam at Auburn and levee improvements proposed in the 1991 ARWI Feasibility Report.

This effort failed because of strong opposition from environmental interests and supporters of a multipurpose dam. However, Congress authorized the Corps to develop a Flood Management Plan for Folsom Dam and Reservoir. Congress also authorized the Natomas area levee improvements.

1996

ARWI Supplemental Information Report

This report supplemented the 1991 ARWI Feasibility Report by presenting three candidate flood protection plans and identifying a recommended plan.

The main element of the recommended plan was the construction of an expandable flood control dam near Auburn, capable of providing Sacramento with protection from a flood with a 1-in-500 chance of occurring in any year.



State of California The Reclamation Board

1996 Water Resources Development Act

In 1996, the Corps, the State, and SAFCA again sought congressional approval for a flood control dam at Auburn. As in 1992, Congress did not approve construction of the dam. Instead, Congress authorized a series of lesser improvements, including strengthening the levees along both sides of the Lower American River and continuing the variable space operation at Folsom Dam on a long-term basis.

1999 Water Resources Development Act

In 1999, Congress approved the most significant package of improvements to Sacramento’s flood control system since the completion of Folsom Dam. These improvements include:

- modifications to the outlet works at Folsom Dam designed to increase it’s release capacity during the early stages of a flood event;
- improvements to portions of the north and south levees of the Lower American River and Mayhew Drain to ensure safe containment of Folsom Dam’s emergency spillway release; and
- an updated Flood Management Plan to reflect enhanced operational capacity and improved weather forecasting.

Congress also directed the Corps to study the next possible steps in the flood control improvement process along the Lower American River: increasing the design capacity of the existing levee system and/or enlarging Folsom Dam and Reservoir to create more flood control storage space.

1997 Flood

The 1997 flood nearly equaled the record volume and exceeded the peak flow of the 1986 flood. However, as a result of the improvements implemented during the preceding 7 years, Sacramento weathered this storm with a much greater margin of safety than in 1986. Nevertheless, the 1997 flood highlighted Sacramento’s continuing vulnerability to uncontrolled flooding along the Lower American River and underscored the urgency of continuing efforts to improve the existing flood control system.

2000 Local Assessment District

In June 2000, Sacramento property owners voted overwhelmingly to approve an assessment on properties within the 100-year floodplain to raise the local share of costs of the projects authorized in the 1999 Water Resources Development Act.

